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Project No. 30.4998
8 December 1966

The State of Civilian Morale

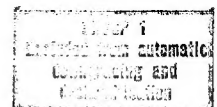
The initial response of North Vietnam's civilian population to the US/GVN air attacks was characterized by a high degree of patriotic enthusiasm which apparently has been dampened little by the stepped-up bombing program since the end of June 1966. The air attacks in large measure have been a strong force for unifying the population in its resistance to the "US aggressors". Although a careful observer may detect a waning of enthusiasm among the population as the war continues, there has been no evident diminution of the determination of the regime to continue the war and there seemingly has been no reduction in the policy options the regime may use to achieve its objectives.

Almost every segment of the civilian population of North Vietnam has been forced to make some sacrifice in its standard of living as the result of the bombing. Much of the sacrifice and hardship is centered in the evacuation of part of the population from urban centers, splitting of families, reductions in the quality of consumer goods and services, increases in work hours largely without additional compensation, and losses of income resulting from transfers from normal jobs to lower paying defense-related tasks. None of these hardships appears to have hurt seriously the level of morale.



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Discussion of civilian mobilization in North Vietnamese publications during 1966 indicate that the regime is encountering difficulties in effectively employing those already mobilized. Appeals from the regime prior to June 1966 brought response from over 3 million youths (ages 16-30) and 1.7 million women, or about 50 percent of the working age population. These groups were to provide active support for the war effort by performing various essential economic and paramilitary tasks under the "three readies" and the "three responsibilities" movements. the participants

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in the movements were highly motivated to contribute to the war effort. Civilian mobilization supposedly increased after the "partial mobilization" order of Ho Chi Minh on 17 July 1966. The difficulties encountered in the mobilization program were blamed largely on the lower level cadres in both the government and the party who did not seem to have the managerial ability to carry out the mobilization and evacuation orders of the regime. Managerial inefficiencies have proliferated since air strikes began in February 1965,



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and have prevented an orderly reallocation of the labor force. The lack of good management in the evacuation program has certainly contributed to a decline in the level of morale.

In an effort to stimulate patriotic fervor the regime's propaganda makes clear the direct connection between North Vietnamese support for the war in the South and the bombing of North Vietnam. [redacted] 25X1

25X1 [redacted] civilians in North Vietnam do in fact see the bombing as a direct consequence of the support furnished by North Vietnam to the Viet Cong. They, moreover, take great pride in their country's achievements in downing American aircraft [redacted] 25X1

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Despite the regime's propaganda on the success of the "liberation forces" in the south, the population in North Vietnam is probably increasingly aware that the war is not going well and that heavy casualties are being suffered by North Vietnamese troops who have been sent south. North Vietnamese soliders who have been captured or who have defected in South Vietnam reveal that some indication of the hardships, sickness, and injuries suffered by infiltrated troops is provided the people at home through letters and by eye-witness reports from wounded veterans who have returned home. If these casualties mount and the morale of the North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam drops seriously, there is likely to be a comparable drop in the morale of the civilian population. Knowledge of military reverses in the field rather than the effect of bombing at home was a major factor in the decline of popular morale in Japan and Germany in World War II.

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Agricultural difficulties -- resulting from the mobilization effort and bad weather -- have affected both the fifth month and the tenth month harvests in 1966, intensifying the already tight food situation in North Vietnam.

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[REDACTED] In addition to the pressure on food supplies, other strains on civilian living standards will probably increase. The regime aware that these strains exist has been urging production of consumer goods by cooperatives on a handicraft basis and has been attempting to organize local markets to make the evacuation process more palatable. Thus, civilian living standards will decline further unless current shortfalls in production are filled by imports from other Communist countries.

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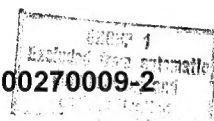
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Manpower

The manpower problem in North Vietnam will not become critical in the near future. There are some dislocations and scarcities of particular types of manpower needed in the war effort, but the regime appears to be able to cope with the situation. The problem is not scarcity of manpower in general, but rather scarcity of specialized kinds of manpower. The drain on manpower resources has been primarily to the build-up of the armed forces, to military support activities, and to the repair or reconstruction of bomb damaged facilities. The DRV has had a mobilization program since 1965 to meet its war-time manpower needs; in addition, in July 1966 a "partial mobilization" order was issued by Ho Chi Minh. Supposedly, this order mobilized part of the reserve officers, noncommissioned officers, men of the Vietnamese People's Army, and part of the citizens belonging to the reserves of the army. According to reporting at the time thousands of men and women applied for enlistment. There has been no evidence that these "volunteers" have been placed on active duty. Perhaps, in part, the July order was designed to rally the people more intensively behind the war effort.

Agricultural workers, students, and women are the major sources from which the regime may draw additional manpower to meet war-time needs. Agricultural workers have been the main source of manpower needed for repairing lines of communication. The regime has claimed that about 60 percent of its agricultural labor force is composed of women; this claim was made both before

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and after mobilization. Probably, the percentage of women in the agricultural labor force has increased. In reality, the agricultural labor force, while a potential source of supply of manpower for the war effort, cannot be tapped heavily without hurting agricultural production. In an attempt to maintain agricultural production while siphoning off agricultural labor, the regime has advocated increased mechanization of agriculture and the return of some persons to farm work at crucial times, such as planting and harvesting. These efforts have had only minor effect, judging from the fact that North Vietnam has been experiencing agricultural production difficulties growing out of manpower and weather problems for the past two years.

If the number of students presently enrolled in DRV educational institutions in foreign universities is used as an indicator, the manpower problem cannot be considered critical. School enrollments in the 1965-66 school year, of the 14-21 age group, were reported by the regime to be double the level of the previous year. In October 1966 Ho Chi Minh announced that 3 million pupils are in school in the 1966-67 school year, and the universities and professional schools have an enrollment of 100,000. In September 1966 the regime announced that four new colleges had been established, suggesting that the war effort has not seriously handicapped the educational policy of the regime.

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Women have traditionally been a source of labor supply for agriculture and the handicraft industries. Shortly after the bombing was stepped up in June 1966 the regime urged the increased use of women, particularly in the agricultural cooperatives and in the militia. In a few provinces the women were being taught to plow and harrow and some were being placed in managerial positions in the agricultural cooperatives. The regime also urged that special training courses in the militia for women be established. In recent months there has been no confirmation of either of these programs.

The two major problems in the manpower situation are the scarcity of a skilled labor force and the lack of managerial ability among the cadres. The regime has been emphasizing technical training by establishing technical institutes in the DRV and by sending the students to other Communist countries for technical education. The regime has tried to solve the managerial problem by making extensive pronouncements about the failures of the cadres in carrying out the mobilization and evacuation programs and seems to intimate that the problem can be solved if the cadres become aware of their political responsibilities.

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